

## Stray Feathers

**New Zealand Notes.**—It may be of some interest to Australian members to know that this year the Double-banded Dotterel, *Charadrius bicinctus*, is a very rare bird here. I have seen only five individuals all told. Last year a flock of twenty was counted by me on the local domain, of which at least five pairs nested in that area, say 50 to 100 acres. In spite of much search, I found no nests until after the young had hatched out; when I found several broken shells, and was promising myself better luck (with more perseverance) this year. To my astonishment not a single pair has nested on the domain, and all told, as I have said, I have seen, while doing my rounds, and while fishing in the rivers, only five individuals. Have they nested in Australia this year? By the way, has anyone noticed that the introduced Goldfinch feeds freely on the seeds of the Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*, a common tree on the Canterbury Plains. I frequently see the dainty little birds picking at the ripe seed-capsules as they lie on the road, presumably trying to extract the seed therefrom.

A bird census of this district might be interesting. My bounds are:—The Selwyn River, Lake Ellesmere, and the sea to the mouth of the Rakaia River, up that stream to the Christchurch-Dunedin railway, and back along that to the Selwyn. The latter river is a rain river, and the Rakaia is snow-fed. Both contain trout, and the Rakaia swarms with salmon, mostly Pacific, and a few Atlantic. The fishing is excellent, and the shooting (Pheasants, Quail (Californian), Hares and Rabbits) would be so too, if it were not for inveterate poaching. The avifauna, if shore birds be excluded, is almost wholly exotic, and I think four pairs of Kingfishers (*Halcyon vagans*) and the same number of Robins (*Petroica macrocephala*) for the whole area (about 10 miles square), and a pair of Warblers (*Pseudogerygone igata*) and the Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*) to each farm (and perhaps half that number of the Swamp Harrier (*Circus gouldi*) would complete the census. I had forgotten the Pipit (*Anthus nova-zealandia*) and the Silver-eye (*Zosterops lateralis*), but it's a poor list surely.—T. J. ICK-HEWINS, M.B., B.S., R.A.O.U.

P.S.—Since writing the above I have been watching the Rakaia River in flood, after heavy thunderstorms in the Southern Alps, and was reminded by the diving Terns of watching a flooded river in New South Wales two years ago, and seeing the White-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga penicillata*), taking deliberate headers into the torrent, going apparently right under almost every time. I have never seen any other land bird go so thoroughly into the water, especially into a swift-flowing and turbid stream.—T. J. ICK-HEWINS.